

*Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010*

**Remarks Following a Briefing on the Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico in Pensacola, Florida**

*June 15, 2010*

We just had a very useful discussion. And I want to thank Governor Crist and the congressional delegation as well as our owner here, Mike Pinzone, of this wonderful facility overlooking this beautiful beach. I want to also thank the mayor of Pensacola for his hospitality.

What we've done is to try to find out from local business owners, local officials, as well as State officials like Alex Sink and Senator LeMieux and others, how the response can be most effective here, specifically in Florida. And when you look out over this unbelievable beach, one of the things that you can see is that so far, at least, this beach has not been affected.

This is a still place that's open for business and welcoming to vacationers, and people can have a wonderful holiday here, and I know the mayor wants to emphasize that. But there are obviously fears about the oil that is offshore.

And what we emphasized was that we're going to be doing everything we can, make sure that there are skimmers out, there are booms out, and a response to keep the oil offshore. But even if we do the best possible job on that, what the mayor described, what Mike described as a local business owner here, is that they're still being affected by perceptions, that visitors have dropped off as much as 40 percent in this area, and that has an impact on the entire economy. You saw the same thing yesterday when we were in Alabama and Mississippi.

So a couple of things that we've done: Number one, to make sure that there is a nimble and effective local response, Thad Allen has now assigned deputy incident commanders to each of the individual States. So Florida will have its own deputy incident commander, as Mississippi and Alabama do.

In addition to the sites in Houma and in Mobile, we're also going to set up an incident management team in Tallahassee, here in Florida. All this is designed to make sure that on the Federal response, we are able to work and make decisions at a local level in response to the suggestions of people who know their communities best and know their waters best. And my expectation is, is that we're going to see a lot of good ideas coming from the local area that we can implement right away, as opposed to waiting until it goes all the way to the top.

But the other thing that we're hearing here is the same thing we heard yesterday, which is, businesses need help right now. I'm going to be addressing this, this evening, the issue of how we can make sure that claims to businesses that have been affected are responded to quickly and fairly.

I'll be meeting with BP chairmen and officials tomorrow to discuss the stories that I've heard from people like Mike. Mike has put in all the paperwork. In fact, he has documented more than amply the fact that his business has been deeply affected by this crisis, but he hasn't received the compensation that he needs to make sure that his business stays open.

And I told Mike—and I want every businessperson here in Florida to know—that I will be their fierce advocate in making sure that they are getting the compensation they need to get through what is going to be a difficult season. But what I described for them is the fact that if we can get through this season, cap this well, mitigate the damage—we're not going to

eliminate it completely; there's going to be damage to the shoreline—but if we can reduce it as much as possible, help businesses get through this season, clean it up, by the time we get to next season, there's no reason why this beach behind us is not going to be as beautiful as ever, and Pensacola and other coastline communities across Florida will be thriving as they always have.

So the key right now is just to make sure that people like Mike are helped, that they're able to get through what's going to be a tough time. And I've told him and I've told the Governor and all the other Florida officials here that we're not going to go away. We're just going to keep on at this until we are able to not only get back to normal but maybe even get better than it was before this crisis.

So I appreciate everybody's input, and we look forward to continuing to work with you on this enormous challenge.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:48 a.m. at the Fish Sandwich Snack Bar. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Charles J. Crist, Jr., of Florida; Mayor Michael C. Wiggins of Pensacola, FL; Chief Financial Officer Adelaide "Alex" Sink of Florida; Adm. Thad W. Allen, USCG, in his capacity as national incident commander for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill; and Carl-Henric Svanberg, chairman of the board, Anthony B. Hayward, group chief executive, Robert W. Dudley, managing director, and Rupert Bondy, group general counsel, BP p.l.c.; and Lamar McKay, chairman and president, BP America, Inc. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Gulf of Mexico oil spill, briefing in Pensacola, FL.

*Locations:* Pensacola, FL.

*Names:* Allen, Thad W.; Bondy, Rupert; Crist, Charles J., Jr.; Dudley, Robert W.; Hayward, Anthony B.; LeMieux, George S.; McKay, Lamar; Pinzone, Mike; Sink, Adelaide "Alex"; Svanberg, Carl-Henric; Wiggins, Michael C.

*Subjects:* Alabama : President's visit; Energy : BP p.l.c.; Environment : Oil spills :: Corporate responsibility; Environment : Oil spills :: Federal response, improvement efforts; Florida : Governor; Florida : President's visits; Gulf of Mexico : Deepwater Horizon oil spill :: Economic effects and recovery efforts; Gulf of Mexico : Deepwater Horizon oil spill :: Environmental effects and cleanup efforts; Mississippi : President's visit.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD201000497.